A scientist says that insanity is on the increase among servant girls. So it is likewise among their employers. — Charleston News and Courier.

Reminiscences Of a Big Indian Earthquake

By Marshall D. Taylor.

It is a long way from Honolulu to the Assem Valley and Dooars, India, but in these days of the cable and telegraph, news of disaster in far-away lands is sent in such incredibly short space of time that one hardly realizes the immense distances intervening between the reader and the sufferer. To some, the great Indian earthquake which occurred on June 12, 1897, is still fresh in the memory, and, to those who may have forgotten the event, this brief article will appeal to their sympathetic nature, especially so since the awful visitation which laid San Francisco in ruins.

In 1826, the British annexed Assam from Burmah, which is now one of the most prosperous valleys of the Indian Empire. Huge steamers ply between Dibrughur and the Sundrebunds, the extreme points of call on the Brahmaputra, now counted as one of the great navigable rivers of the world. Like its western sister, the Sutlej, this river has its source near Manasarawar, one of the sacred lakes of Thibet, which, flowing eastward through that little-known land for nearly 1000 miles is joined by several large streams from China as it sweeps round the Himalayas. In Thibet, it is known as Tsan-pu, but on entering Assam it goes under the appellation of the Dihang. Shortly after its advent in the Assam Valley, the Brahmaputra which is also an eastern stream, joins it, causing its title of Dihang to be changed to that of the Brahmaputra. At Goalundo it is joined by the Ganges the sacred river of the Hindus, then later by the Surma from Cachar. This tremendous body of water, now known as the Meghna, rushes onward to the Bay of Bengal, and, splitting up into innumerable channels, forms the Sunderbunds and the great Gangetic delta which stretches from Chittagong to Calcutta.

There are many beautiful points of interest along this route, especially at Gauhati, where the hills rise abruptly on either side of the stream, which is divided by a small and rocky island among whose foliage can be seen the white pinnacles of a temple. During the passage up the river, large freight steamers, each escorting from two to four immense flats laden with tea, jute, rice and other products peculiar to this fertile valley, are frequently passed. At dusk, when the vessel comes to an anchor off one of the ghats, the sweet tones of a nearby temple peal forth, to be taken up by and mingled with those from temples on the other side of the river, which bear our thoughts back to the vision of a peaceful scene—an old homested, an ivy-covered church, the cheery voices of children at play, the lowing of kine, and the hundred and one remembrances so dear to the absent one.

Gauhati is as far as we proceeded by steamer, so after bidding adieu to our friends who are on their way to Dibrughur in Northern Assam, a room is engaged at the Dak bungalow (rest house) and arrangements are made for the tonga drive to Shillong, the hill sanatorium of the province.

What a ride! The chariot races of ancient Rome were nothing as compared to this mode of travel. As the tonga sweeps round the many curves at full speed, with yawning chasms on one side and frowning cliffs above, we involuntarily held our breath, expecting every moment that the ponies would stumble or that a wheel would slip its axle, when all would be precipitated into one of the heavily timbered canyons, which looked so peaceful and refreshing after the glare and heat of the plains.

Shillong was reached just before sundown. As the tonga rounded the last curve, the familiar notes of a bugle from the Gurkha lines echoed and re-echoed through the hills, as if to welcome the tired and fever-stricken sahibs who had come to this sweet little haven to recoup and enjoy the hospitality for which India is so noted.

Shillong is situated among the Khasia hills, and only some forty miles from Cherra Poonjee, where the greatest rainfall in the world is registered. It seems hardly credible that at this latter place as many as 600 to 700 inches per annum should be registered, but such is the case, however. Dr. Hooker, the eminent botanist alone registered as many as 530 inches from June to November, while the greatest fall in one year totalled the remarkable figure of 805 inches, of which 366 inches fell in a single month. As one would naturally infer little or no vegetation is to be found on this rain-swept plateau, but taking it as a whole, Cherra Poonjee is not an unhealthy locality, being free from the mist so common to other Himalayan sanitoria with one-fifth the rain fall. Shillong, on the other hand, is a beautiful spot, whose pretty bungalows and government buildings surrounded by a wealth of flowers nestle amidst stately trees and towering hills. Here and there a well-kept tennis lown is seen, pointing to the fact that even in this far-away resort western games and customs are in vogue.

One can hardly realize that this peaceful spot should have been visited by such a calamity as an earthquake, which in a few moments plunged the whole town and hillside into the throes of panic, with its resultant sorrows of grief-stricken families surrounded by the wreckage of their once pretty homes. Perhaps the most grue some features was a visit to the cemetery. Here all was chaos; bones and pieces of coffins, the relics of past interments, were strewn about the graveyard indiscriminately. Such was the force of the quake that the huge blocks of masonry and cement which surrounded most of the bodies as a protection against ghouls were hurled forcibly from their postions, many retaining their exact form and shape. The Gurkha troops in garrison at the time rendered most heroic service in caring for the injured, burying the dead and erecting temporary shelters for the homeless, but it is just what might be expected of these men who have always been ever foremost and ready to succor and aid the afflicted and although they themselves lost several of their comrades in the destruction of their barracks, yet they responded to thet call with the alercity so characteristic of these brave little fighters.

The Dooars, which might almost be called the continuation of the Assam Valley, suffered to the same extent. The new steel bridge on the Cooch Behar State Railway was thrown bodily into the river, the support fell with a crash a few hours after the shock. The Lill-Kooty, the home of the British Resident of the State of Cooch Behar was totally wrecked while roads, bridges and railway tracks were so torn up and damaged as to impede the mails and traffic for many days. The town of Cooch Behar distant some 42 miles from where I was located, was very badly damaged. The magnificent palace of the hospitable Maharajah with its newly installed electric light plant became a total ruin, necessitating a vast expenditure to restore it to a semblance of its former beauty.

If such an earthquake had occurred in New York or in fact any of the large cities on the mainland, not one stone would have been left upon another, and the loss of life would have been frightful; but though this shock affected an area many hundreds of miles in length, so much of this was in virgin forest, the scattered villages being far distant from each other, that the damage to property was slight in comparison to San Francisco. Not so the loss of life, however. Hundreds of people were killed, mostly natives whose pretty little thatched huts perched on the hillsides were hurled together with their occupants, to the depths below and buried under a perfect avalanche of debris.

One of the saddest incidents of this black day was that of an American missionary, Rev. D. H. Lee, who lost five of his six children in one of these landslides. The boarding school in Darjeeling in which these children had been placed was literally buried under a mountain of rock and earth, killing the occupants to the number of 150. The horror of that day can never be eradicated from my memory nor the suspense of the subsequent shocks, which occurring at intervals throughout the night, kept one's nerves at a highly-strung pitch.

This earthquake had its humorous side, however, and many times I laugh as I picture in my mind's eye the various episodes of that eventful day. The bungalow in which I lived was not one of the most comfortable. In fact it was nothing better than a shack perched some seven feet from the ground. For company's sake I kept a menagerie composed of eight dogs, one tame deer two monkeys and some parrots, in addition to the estate elephant and ponies. I was busy writing when the first shock occurred, and paid no attention to it, thinking it was the dogs playing about the rickety verandah, but when the water in my bathtub began to splash over and the pictures and furniture to fall down and be tossed about the room, I realized what was taking place and rushed down the verandah steps to the safety of the compound.

Here all was pandemonium; so great was the quake that it was necessary to sit down. The sight from all directions which met one's gaze was most ludicrous; the dogs were careening about the compound in a half-drunken fashion, their tails between their legs, looking most bewildered and forlorn; the deer, stopping every now and then to sniff the air, would throw its head back and rush off at full speed; shouts from the coolie lines, bellowing of cattle, screeching of parrots and the wild gestures of one of the sirdars (overseers) who with wild eyes, his turban off, and perched on top of an embankment, was seemingly invoking aid from one of his gods.

Many of the large fissures and depressions are now filled in by alluvial deposits washed down by the monsoon, nature assisting in clothing these with a wealth of tropical vegetation.

Salt Lake in defiance of the prophets, is rising to higher levels than it ever rose before in the memory of man. It may be filling up with crocodile tears shed by the Salt Lakers who do not want the prize fight.